

## Revelation Ch. 2

### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS 2 & 3:

**Revelation 1:19** “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hear after;”



- Chapters 4-19 are somewhat sensational, and to some are the exciting part of Revelation, but they detail what will happen to un-believers, it applies directly to them.
- Chapters 2-3 speak of and directly to believers and should be cause for a sober minded self-examination.

Paul writes about the church being the bride of Christ:

**Ephesians 5:25-27** <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; <sup>26</sup>That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup>That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

- Jesus writes these letters to His bride, the church with the intent that they would understand where they stand and what things are needed.
- Christ loves the church and He's given His life to cleanse and sanctify His bride.

- We the church, corporately and individually are imperfect, we're full of spots and wrinkles. Never the less we belong to Christ, and He is in our midst working through the Holy Spirit convicting, leading, comforting, chastening, and building His church.
  - In Revelation chapters 2 & 3 we see the 7 churches - "completeness", representing all churches, all of which are weak in one way or another.
    1. Some seemingly strong outwardly strong, but inwardly full of compromise and moral decay.
    2. Others, spiritually strong, but physically weak.
  - There is significance to the sequence of the churches.
  - The 7 churches represent the church as a whole, and they represent the stages of church history.
  - The last 4 churches (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) survive until the return of Christ.
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**Structure:** there is a consistent structure to each of the 7 letters, a consistent pattern which points to divine inspiration and purpose.

- 1st. three churches, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, the promise comes after the admonition to listen.
  - For the last 4 churches, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, the promise comes before the admonition.
  - Each of the 7 letters is composed of 7 parts
1. **Salutation:** "Unto the angel of the church at..... write"
    - None of the church epistles is addressed to a pastor, bishop, elder, or other human messenger, always to the church, with the angel representing the church and guarding the transmission of the epistle.
  2. **Identification of Christ as the sender:** "These are the words of Him who..." then He is identified by some characteristic as detailed in chapter 1 that was / is appropriate to the individual message to that particular church.
  3. **Assertion of knowledge:** "I know your deeds, works, afflictions. Having intimate knowledge of each situation, attitude, and heart.
  4. **Comment, exhortation, or correction:** The core message to each church, commendation - rebuke - both, adapted perfectly to each church. Each church is exhorted not to sit still, to keep striving, moving etc.
    - 5 out of 7 churches are told to repent because they'd become corrupted.

- Christ is in their midst, the Holy Spirit is speaking to each of them / us. Christ's exhortations to them apply equally to each of us.
5. **Promised / threatened coming of Christ:**
- Threatened to those to whom He'll be coming in judgment.
  - Promised to those faithful servants who he reassures.
6. **Admonition to heed:** "*he that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.*"
- Each church had a different message, and it was important that they each hear it, and heed what Christ, through the Spirit would say to each church.
  - Some of the churches are given this admonition after the promised blessing, some before.
7. **Promised blessing:** "*to him that overcomes*", a special blessing to all those who are faithful, who in their faith overcome the world in their temptations and persecutions.

**1 John 5:4-5**      "*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

- The name of each church is and has a significant meaning and relates to the central theme of each letter.
- There of 4 applications of the 7 letters as a whole:
  1. **Local:** for the 7 actual churches and their specific situations.
  2. **Corporately:** Every church has elements of all 7 churches within them:

Ephesus:	neglected priorities - first love.
Smyrna:	oppression - inspired by Satan.
Pergamum:	Religion / compromise.
Thyatira:	immoral practices - idolatry.
Sardis:	spiritual apathy - deadness.
Philadelphia:	faithfulness
Laodicea:	self-sufficiency.
  3. **Personal:** Each of us has or embodies elements of all 7 churches at various times.

Prophetic application:

4. **Prophetic:** Each of the 7 letters covers a part or phase of church history.

Ephesus:	Apostolic Church,	A.D.	30 - 100
Smyrna:	Persecuted Church		100 - 312
Pergamum:	Imperial Church		312 - 606
Thyatira:	Papal Church		606 - trib.
Sardis:	Reformed Church		1520 - trib.
Philadelphia:	Missionary Church		1750 - rapture
Laodicea:	Apostate Church		1900 - trib.

**Apostate:** abandoning one's faith, turning away from.

- These 7 letters cover the church age, the gap between the 69th. and 70th. week of Daniel.
- The 7 letters, if placed in any other order don't fit. They are listed in the order a messenger would take them in one continuous route to each church geographically. They also fit nicely in a prophetic order, for a reason:
- And they are meant to be understood, again I say....

**Amos 3:7** "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

**2 Peter 1:20** "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

- These letters are Jesus' epistles to the churches, and to the church as a whole.
- Each of these "report cards" can now be examined by each of us in light of God's Word, knowing what we have been directed and encouraged to do so by the Word of God.

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### BACKGROUND ON EPHEBUS:

- Acts chapter 19 is a good overview on Ephesus.
- Ephesus means "darling".
- Ephesus was half way between Rome and Jerusalem, the approximate center of the Roman Empire.
- 3 letters were written to the Ephesians, one by Paul in the book of Ephesians, one by John in the book of 1-John, and this one by Jesus.
- Paul also addresses them in the book of Acts 20:17-38 warning them of false teachers who would come their way, understanding that the true threat to the church would come from within.

- Ephesus represents the beginning of the Church, Paul visited there, John ministered there.
- Paul spent 2-3 years there on 2 separate visits.
- Mary, the mother of Jesus died there, Timothy was martyred there.
- Ephesus was a very worldly place, very materialistic, pagan, Hellenistic.
- Ephesus was a harbor town, founded around 2000 BC by Hittites.
- Ephesus was a magnificent city with streets paved in marble, it had many buildings, a large library, an amphitheater that seated 25,000 people, and had an estimated population of 350,000.
- Ephesus was built around a temple to "Diana", a fertility goddess, also known as "Artemis" in the Greek, and as "Ashtureth", then later "Cybele".
- The temple built to Artemis by Alexander the great was the largest Greek temple ever built, 4 times the size of the Parthenon in Athens and was one of the 7 great wonders of the ancient world.
- Diana et al was depicted in statues with a turreted head and numerous breasts, and was the center of a cult complete with a host of temple priestess' / courtesans / prostitutes.
- Much of the culture & economy was centered on the silver idols fashioned to represent their false deity - over which Paul caused a riot with the silversmiths.
- "Pilgrims" (AKA: Johns / tricks) came from far away to "worship" at the temple and left with souvenirs / idols.
- Ephesus was one of the most important cities in the Roman province of Asia, standing at the end of the great caravan routes from Asia, it was a bridge between East and West.
- As the harbor filled up with silt from the river, the city became more dependant on tourism and sales of idols, to which Christianity was a direct threat. This eventually lead to the riots described in Acts 19.
- Ephesus is now 20 miles inland and dead.
- Ephesus was the biggest and strongest of the churches in the area, from which the other churches came out of according to **Acts 19:10**.

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## Revelation Chapter 2

**V:1a**        *"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;"* (salutation)

- To the guardian angel / to the pastor?
- Angel = (G32) . aggelos, ang'-el-os; from a messenger; esp. an "angel"; by impl. a pastor:--angel.

**V:1b**        *"...These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;"*

- From Jesus....
- [Attributes of Jesus from : Revelation 1:13, 16](#)
- He who holds the angels / stars in His hand reminds us of His position of power and control as he begins His message.

**Matthew 28:18**        "... All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

- Jesus in the midst of His people.

**Matthew 18:20**        "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

**V:2a**        *"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience,..."*

- God is omniscient, all knowing.

**Hebrews 4:13**        "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

- God is always watching us. He loves us so much he can't take his eyes off of us!

**Psalms 34:15**        "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."

2 Chronicles 16:9    1 Chron.28:9

**Proverbs 15:3**        "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

- God is keeping his promise.

**Psalm 32:8** "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

- The Ephesians are in a way still zealous 40 years after being started by Paul - in their works, and labor, and patience.
- But this can be contrasted with the Thessalonian believers.

**1 Thessalonians 1:3** "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God our Father;"

- The Ephesians in their zeal may have lacked faith, love, and hope, which relates later on to having fallen away from their "first love".

*"Patience:"*

**Philippians 1:6** "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

**V:2b** *"... and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:"*

**1 John 4:1-3** <sup>1</sup>"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: <sup>3</sup>And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: And this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

**Acts 17:11** "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

**1 Thessalonians 5:21** "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

- They are being commended for looking out for false teachers, those who claim to be apostles; just as they were told.

**Matthew 24:4-5** "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

- There are no modern day apostles, one prime requirement was that to be an apostle one had to have actually seen Christ. (1 **Corinthians 9:11**).



### Qualifications for Apostles:

- |                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Called by Jesus:          | <b>Matthew 10:1, Ephesians 4:11.</b> |
| 2. Seen the risen Lord:      | <b>1 Corinthians 9:11.</b>           |
| 3. Fellowshiped with Jesus:  | <b>Acts 1:21-22.</b>                 |
| 4. Empowered to do miracles: | <b>Matthew 10:1, 8.</b>              |

*“... and hast found them liars.”*

**John 8:31-32** <sup>31</sup>Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye My disciples indeed; <sup>32</sup>And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

**Revelation 21:8** “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

**V: 2-3** Between verses 2 & 3 we see 7 points of commendation. ☺

1. I know your works / deeds.
2. Your hard work.
3. Your patience / perseverance.
4. No toleration of wicked men.
5. Testing, trying all to see / find them out.
6. Having borne, endured hardships.
7. Have not fainted or grown weary.

**V: 3** *“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”*

- Perseverance counts! Don't give up, God is paying attention.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, un-moveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

**Hebrews 12:1** “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

- The church of Ephesus' zeal and steadfastness in the name of Jesus Christ resulted in the spreading of the gospel all over Asia and the world.

**Acts 19:10, 26**      **Colossians 1:5-6**



- Ephesus was a working church, in labor they did not faint.
- Regarding enduring hardships:

**2 Timothy 3:12** “Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

**Acts 14:21-22** “<sup>21</sup>And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup>confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

Mind set:

**Romans 8:35-39** “<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. <sup>37</sup>Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Matt. 19:29 - Romans 15:4-5 - Philippians 1:29 – Isaiah 40:30-31**

**Rev. 1:9** “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...”

**V: 4** *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”*

- If Jesus holds anything against them, it is only because they haven't asked for forgiveness of it and or repented of it.

**1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- They had forsaken / left their first love, not lost, an act of the will.

**2:4b** *“... thy first love...”*

**Matthew 22:37** “Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

**2:4b** *"... thy first love..."*

- Our first love is Jesus Himself, and seeking to please Him!

**Revelation 4:11** “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

**Colossians 1:16**

- Love for Jesus Christ as opposed to "the law", as opposed to religion, or religious observances.

**1 Samuel 15:22** “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

- The church of Ephesus was: **Acts 19:2-6**

1st. Baptized into faith by John the Baptist.

2nd. Baptized by the Holy Spirit through Paul, receiving the Word of God eagerly, repenting of their sins, bringing others to the Lord by spreading the Word.

- They had lost their intensity, enthusiasm, and devotion to Christ. They began to lack a close, personal, loving relationship with Christ.
- Working is not work when you love the one you are working for.
- Hard work is not an acceptable substitute for a loving relationship with Jesus!(Mary vs: Martha)
- Early on many pagan temples were converted to Christian churches.
- 4 pillars were erected in Ephesus to commemorate the 4 gospels, one of which is still standing today which bears a cross on it.
- Typical of many churches in the late apostolic period, their zeal and faithfulness were still strong but the warmth of their original love, for one another, for the lost, and for the Lord was beginning to cool.
- Basically they were merely going through the motions, no longer being motivated by love for Jesus Christ, being motivated by pressure, habit, ritual, etc.

**Mark 7:6-9** “<sup>6</sup>He answered and said unto them, well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. <sup>7</sup>Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. <sup>8</sup>For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and may other such like things ye do.”

- This sad testimony can be applied to many churches and believers today.

You can have everything going for you, but with out love, all is lost!

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3** “<sup>1</sup>Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity <sup>love</sup>, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity <sup>love</sup>, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity <sup>love</sup>, it profiteth me nothing.”

- We were created to have a close, loving, personal relationship with Jesus.

**1 Cor. 1:9    1 John 1:3    Colossians 1:16    Rev. 4:11**

- Christ is to be the most important love of our lives and our relationship to Him is to be the closest!      **Colossians 1:18    Matthew 10:37**

**V:5** *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."*

- Remember where you started! The Ephesians started out great then stumbled or slid significantly - Acts 19.
- Repent! Turn back towards God, do what you did in the beginning.
- If you don't He'll remove your lamp stand / church. If there is no light, who needs a lamp stand?
- Jesus is the lampstand, the lamp is the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus won't be part of a church that doesn't have Him at the center, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- He already told us that "You can't do it without me!"

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

- 431 A.D. Emperor Theodosius held a church council at Ephesus. 200 bishops affirmed Mary as the mother of God (vs: mother of Jesus), this became heretical doctrine, with the focus now on Mary, not on Jesus!
- Christ was calling the Ephesian church to repentance, to rise up to their first level of spirituality. If not, the day would inevitably come when its angel would be withdrawn and Christ would no longer be in their midst. This warning applies to any and every church, or person, whose love for Christ has cooled.
- When you leave Christ you have no where to go but down, "falling away". Who is moving?
- The bottom line is that we will be removed from His presence, He won't hang around or stay with this kind of church.

**V:6** *"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."*

- This much you are doing right.
- Nicolaitians: **Nico**: (Greek) conquer, overcome, priesthood.  
**Laos**: the people, laity.
- A few of possibilities as follows, we don't know for sure:
  1. A people who's doctrine was similar to that of Balaam who's influence caused the Israelites to eat meat sacrificed to idols and commit fornication, both spiritual and physical. He taught the people to sin.

Balaam was a diviner employed by King Balak (Deut. 23:4) to curse Israel but blessed them instead (Numbers 22-24). He then tried to turn the Israelites away from God using enemy women and their idols. Also referred to in **Jude 11, 2 Peter 2:15** as hypocritical leaders who led God's people astray by trying to control them.
  2. Possibly a group named after Niclaus of Antioch who formed an agnostic cult which taught amongst other things that one must indulge in sin to understand it. They gave themselves over to sensuality with the explanation that such sins didn't touch or involve the spirit and therefore didn't concern God.

They also set up an ecclesiastical order or hierarchy of priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes, teaching the "laity" to depend on men as opposed to an abiding relationship with Christ, and claiming "divine" authority over the people. Placing a clergy class between God and us.
  3. The Nicolaitanes may simply have been false or pseudo apostles, false teachers, prophets, or even false Christ's.

- All three groups did exist, and Christ warned us about them.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** <sup>13</sup>For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

**Matthew 20:26-28** "...but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; <sup>27</sup>and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: <sup>28</sup>even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

- In any priesthood, where there is a spiritual hierarchy over the people, in our minds this puts some men closer to God than others, God wants us all to be close to him. He wants us to come directly to Him in Christ Jesus.
- He doesn't want anyone standing in the way! He died to give us access to the throne of God.
- The curtain / veil in the temple was torn upon Jesus' death on the cross, nothing stood between us and Him, that is what he died for and we should honor that.

**Matthew 27:51** "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;"

- If you know the truth, you'll recognize the lie.

**John 8:31-32** "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

- Ephesus had been ministered to by John the Baptist, Paul, Timothy, and John, they had been given the truth.

**V: 7** *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."*

- What the Spirit says to the churches - plural, they were to "hear" the whole book, not just the individual letter.
- The intent was for all churches, including those in the future; not just those of John's day to hear what Jesus had to say.

**Proverbs 18:15** "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge."

**1 Peter 3:4** "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

- Life comes through the Word of God, to those who hear it!

**John 5:25** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

**Romans 10:17** "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

*"... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."*

- Encouraging us to overcome, resist temptation and sin.

**1 John 5:4-5** "4For whatsoever is born of god overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

- Offering rewards in heaven for those who do, the right to eternal life in heaven, getting to be in heaven, restoring what had been lost in Eden.
- Only those who desire to do God's will can know God's will.

**John 7:17** "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

- Having "ears to hear" is repeated in all 7 letters.
- In John's other epistles he uses "overcome" with specific intent, or subjects in mind. Overcoming evil, the world, wicked one etc. (**1 John 2:13, John 16:33**) Here however it is applied as overcoming all things in Christ Jesus.
- Either you overcome, or you are overcome.

**2 Peter 2:19** "... for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

- In every church, even the most apostate, there are individual over comers who truly know Jesus Christ.
- Regarding eating from the tree of life. Adam chose between the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, we are given that same choice, or reward. All we need to do is choose.